

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

O C T O B E R 9.

Being the DAY appointed for a

GENERAL THANKSGIVING

TO

ALMIGHTY GOD;

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION

Of the late

Unnatural Rebellion.

By *Rich* W A T K I N S, M. A.

Rector of *Clifton Campvile*
in *Staffordshire*.

L O N D O N:

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[Price Six-Pence.]



103
SERMON

PREFACE

OCTOBER

Being the first appointed for

GENERAL FUNDRAISING



ALMIGHTY GOD

FOR THE

SUPPRESSION

Of the late

Unnatural Rebellion.

B. R. WATKINS, M.A.

Rector of Christ Church,
in Staffordshire.

LONDON:
Printed and Sold by J. Wason, at the Turk's
Head in Great Street. 1846.
[Price Six-Pence.]



I SAM. XII. 24, 25.

Only fear the Lord, and serve him in Truth, with all your Heart : For consider how great Things he hath done for you.

But if ye shall still do Wickedly, ye shall be Consumed both ye and your King.



HIS Counsel of *Samuel* to the People of *Israel* was given upon Occasion of their asking them a King, and of their Humiliation and desponding Fear upon their Sense of the divine Displeasure in the dreadful Tokens of *unusual* Thunder and Rain. *The People greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And they said unto Samuel, Pray for*

thy Servants unto the Lord, that we die not; for we have added unto all our Sins this Evil to ask us a King, ver. 18, 19.

Their Sin in asking a King plainly lay in their Ingratitude to *Samuel*, whose Government, far from admitting any just Complaint, claimed their highest Acknowledgments for the Blessings they enjoyed under a wise and just and gracious Administration. They likewise highly dishonoured God by their Distrust of his Providence so often signally displayed in their Behalf, in desiring to transfer the Government to other Hands, notwithstanding God's immediate Call of *Samuel* to that high Office, *Samuel's* excellent Endowments, and God's special Interposition upon all great Occasions to assist and direct him.

That the People had sufficient Notices of God's particular Appointment of *Samuel* to be their Judge, and of his extraordinary Providence superintending their Affairs, is clearly intimated in the 8th. Chapter—*They have not* (says God) *rejected Thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them,* ver. 7. For it is expressly said in the 12th Chap-

Chapter ver. 12. That *the Lord their God was their King.*

The Occasion of the Words of *Samuel* being briefly shewn ; the Particulars very proper to be considered at this Time are these, which are contained in the Text.

First. The Means which alone can secure the Happiness of a Nation ; which are True and Undissembled Religion : *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in Truth, with all your Heart.*

Secondly. An Argument or Motive to excite them to Religion, drawn from the experienced Mercies of God : *For consider how great Things he hath done for you.*

Thirdly. A Dissuasive or Discouragement from repeating their Sins, drawn from the terrible Consequences of continuing in Sin : *But if ye shall still do Wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your King.*

1. Religion is the only firm Security of the Happiness of a Nation.

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By Religion I would be understood to mean not (which is often consistent with unrighteous Practice) a blind and superstitious Zeal ; but a sincere and stedfast Regard to the Laws of Reason and Scripture, evidencing itself by a correspondent Practice in the Course of a virtuous Life, under a Sense of the Authority of God as Supreme Governour and Judge of the World.

Were a Nation thus truly Religious, no doubt the Fruits of such a National Piety, would be great National Blessings. This we might very reasonably expect, both from the *natural* Tendency of Religion to procure both publick and private Happiness ; and from the *Providence* of God, which seems especially concerned to secure this natural Tendency.

There is no Human Law, no Force, or Restraint, that can secure effectually the *Social* Duties, so as to create that Harmony among Men, which contributes above all Things to the Tranquillity of their Minds, and of consequence to the truest Happiness
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of Life, which no outward Circumstances can procure. But Religion infallibly does this, being the only effectual Bond of Duty, as it influences the Heart : Whereas the Magistrate can compell but the outward Act ; and the wisest Laws but very imperfectly prevent the pernicious Effects of corrupt and vicious Inclinations.

Every Moral Virtue tends to the Advantage of those who possess it, and of all others with whom they have any Concerns. Temperance and Chastity preserve the Health of the Body, and all the Faculties of the Mind in their full Vigour and Perfection : By which Men are fitter to discharge the Business of their Station ; and are usually far happier in a slender Fortune and obscure Condition than others in the greatest Affluence and Splendour. An honest Industry is the Parent of Plenty, at least of a Competency, with Contentment, which is true Riches. Fidelity and Truth produce mutual Confidence, which is the Soul of Society, and the Security of Publick Happiness. Above all, Charity or good-Will to all Men, the genuine Effect of true Religion, infallibly causes
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the greatest Happiness so far as its Influence reaches. And if even those who profess the Reformed Religion (whose Number is small compared with those whose Religion is usually found to be the reverse of all Charity) were true to their Profession, and practiced universally that Benevolence and Publick Spirit which are essential Parts and distinguishing Characters of the Gospel of Christ; the happy Effects of it to this and all other Protestant Countries, notwithstanding the Power and Malice of Popery, would be greater than is easy to describe.

As Religion and Virtue tend evidently to the Happiness of Society; it is no less evident that Irreligion and Vice on the contrary produce many Publick Evils. A few Persons may possibly find their Account at present in their own or other Men's Vices. Dishonest Arts may serve a present Turn. The Plenty of one may arise from the Profusion or Luxury of another. Great Places may be purchased by the Sacrifice of Honour and Conscience: And the Villain may grow rich by Oppression, and *build his House by grinding the Face of the Poor.*

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And it sometimes happens on the other Hand that the Discharge of a good Conscience shall be the very Means of keeping a Man low in the World. None of these Cases are the *proper* or *natural* Effects of Vice or Virtue; but are owing to the corrupt State of a Nation, a Deficiency in the Laws, or in the Administration of them; whence Virtue and Vice in *particular* Instances will fail of suitable Rewards and Punishments. But these particular Cases by no Means infringe the Truth of the general Assertion, that Righteousness, (when it publickly prevails,) exalteth a Nation, or maketh it happy and flourishing: But Sin, (when it becomes general) is the Reproach and Ruin of a Nation.

But further. The *Providence* of God seems especially concerned to secure the natural Tendency of Virtue to make a People prosperous and happy. Particular good Men may often be afflicted for wise Ends: And it does not appear inconsistent with divine Justice to send them Afflictions; because no Man is free from such Faults, either in his past or present Conduct, as will justify Afflictions in a

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Penal Sense : And the Sufferings of good Men, as a Trial of their Virtue, will be a Means of their greater final Happiness. We cannot therefore certainly infer God's Hatred to any Person from his present Sufferings: Nor is it an Argument of a Man's Goodness, or of God's Love towards him, that he prospers in this World, and is exalted to great Riches and Honours.

But with Publick Communities it seems agreeable to the Wisdom and Justice of Providence to reward or punish with temporal Blessings or Curses, according as they *generally* excel in Virtue, or are corrupted with Vice; because publick Societies, as such, can be rewarded or punished only in this World. National Judgments and Mercies must cease of Course when Nations are dissolved, as they will be in another World; and every Man will then be rewarded or punished in exact Proportion to his *personal* Deserts.

As the present Life then is the only Season for National Judgments or Mercies, there is the highest reason to expect the former when the Iniquities of a Nation are notorious,

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ous, and seem to be ripe for Vengeance, and Challenge as it were the Almighty to vindicate his Honour by a signal and exemplary Punishment: And there is just ground to hope, on the other hand, that, upon a general Repentance and Reformation of Manners, God will show himself merciful by recalling his Judgments, staying the Messengers of his Wrath commissioned to destroy: and will shower down his Blessings upon the Land.

These Methods of Providence seem agreeable to the Experience of all Ages of the World. The History of the *Jews* acquaints us that they were ever prosperous or calamitous according as they obeyed or disobeyed the Voice of God. And of other Nations who were not under an express *Covenant* with God, as the *Jews*, but were directed only by *natural* Light, all History informs us that they flourished or declined in Proportion as they were good or bad.

If it can be thought an Objection to what has been remarked, that many of the Potent Empires of the World have been raised and supported by Violence and Cruelty, Noto-

rious Infringement of Publick Treaties, and of the Natural Rights of other Nations——

I answer, that the Happiness and Prosperity of a Nation must consist in the Welfare of the *whole Body* of the Nation; in the Security of Men's Property, or Fruits of their Industry, and the free enjoyment of all their Civil and Religious Rights. The Wealth of the Sovereign, or Extent of his Dominions, or the Numbers of his Troops, or great Abilities of his Ministers, may so far be from increasing his People's Happiness, that they usually produce a contrary Effect, as the Experience both of Ancient and Later Times has abundantly shown. And in Proportion to the Power and Independency of the Sovereign, his Pleasure has commonly taken Place of Law; Luxury and all Vice have abounded in his Court; while heavy Oppression and every Degree of Wretchedness has been the Lot of his People.

The bare Mention of this Matter, the Condition of those Countries, where a lawless Monarchy is erected, too well known to need any further Enlargement, naturally leads our Thoughts to the

2. Particular, which is the Argument used by *Samuel* to excite the *Israelites* to *fear and serve the Lord*, drawn from the Consideration of the great Mercies they had experienced in their Deliverances from Tyranny and Oppression. *Consider how great Things he hath done for you.*

The Nation of the *Jews* had received such illustrious Proofs of the divine Mercy and Goodness in many great Deliverances and Blessings, above any other Nation of the Earth, as showed in a peculiar Manner that *the Lord was their God*. They were rescued by a mighty Hand from intolerable *Egyptian* Bondage. They were miraculously conducted through the Wilderness, and *sustained with Bread from Heaven*. *Samuel* in his Expostulation with them, to awaken a Sense of their Ingratitude, briefly recounts the Mercies they had received. *When your Fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron which brought them out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this Place*, Chapter 12. ver. 8. When their Sins had brought them into great
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Distresses afterwards, and they cried unto the Lord, and confessed their Sins, *then* (says he) *the Lord* raised up Judges, (from Time to Time) *and delivered you out of the Hand of your Enemies; And ye dwelled safe,* ver. 11.

Their Provocations had been great and numerous, notwithstanding repeated and solemn Warnings, and Manifestations of divine Displeasure in the signal Judgments that pursued their Transgressions. Nevertheless as oft as they returned to their Obedience, God turned from the Fierceness of his Anger, and visited them again with his Loving-Kindness. Of this they had frequent Assurances before hand from God by the Mouth of his Servant *Moses*, to encourage their Obedience. *If from thence* (i. e. after their Dispersion for their Idolatries) *thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy Heart*——*When thou art in Tribulation, and all these Things are come upon thee* (i. e. all the Miseries of Dispersion among the Heathen Nations, as Famine and Sword, Captivity and sore Oppression) *if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his Voice: —He will not forsake thee, —Nor forget thee*

the Covenant of thy Fathers which he swore unto them *. Which was, *to be their God* † : A Phrase comprehending every Blessing spiritual and temporal. He afterwards recites the Blessings they should receive upon Condition of Obedience. Chap. 28. ver. 1.—*The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all Nations of the Earth.—The Lord shall make thee plenteous in good, in the Fruit of thy Body, and in the Fruit of thy Cattle, and in the Fruit of thy Ground. He shall open to thee his good Treasure, the Heaven to give thee Rain upon thy Land in his Season, and to bless all the Work of thine Hand.*

Let us now turn our Thoughts from the *Jews* to our own Nation and Times, wherein we may observe many parallel Circumstances between the *Chosen People*, and the People of this Land.

We have heard in the Days of our Fathers, and have experienced in our own Times the signal Mercies of God, in the Deliverance of this Nation from many dreadful Evils : Evils!—which we must look upon

* Deut. iv. 29, 30, 31. † See Gen. xvii. 7. Lev. xxvi. 12.

upon as Judgments of Heaven for the Sins of the People ; and as so many Warnings, or solemn Calls to Repentance. And oh ! that the Goodness of God, so illustriously displayed in our Behalf, may at length dispose us all to walk before him in Newness of Life, and with a perfect Heart : That it may inflame us with an holy Zeal for his Service, and awaken the Voice of Joy and Thanksgiving.

If any among us can be insensible of the past Calamities of his Country——If he be not seriously affected with those Periods of our History which record those Calamities, and our Deliverance from them——and especially if the last great Instance of our Success against an unprovoked Rebellion should fail to excite his Thankfulness to Almighty God, and under him to the glorious Instrument of our Success, the illustrious *Hero* that conducted and animated our Forces——He must either be destitute of all Principles of Humanity, or under a judicial Blindness and Infatuation ; and in either Case all Argument or Reasoning would be lost upon him. For whatever was a Man's religious Persuasion, he must first abandon Reason
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and Nature itself, and be hardened against all Impressions of Compassion, before he could approve of promoting his Religion by Methods contrary to all Religion, the Destruction of many thousand Lives, and involving a Nation in all the Miseries of intestine War ; or compelling others to renounce their Faith, by Dungeons, or Fire, or lingering Tortures. The bare mention of such Methods of promoting, tho' it were the Profession of true Religion, instead of the most erroneous and corrupt, is shocking to human Nature : And the Cruelties of an Inquisition in the whole Progress of its hellish Contrivance are too full of Horror to be endured even in Description or Thought.

It is not therefore credible, it is not possible that any sincere Protestant, who knows what he professes, can be insensible of the Happiness of being freed from the most dreadful of all temporal Calamities, Popish Cruelty and Superstition throned in the Plenitude of its Power. Nay he must reflect, with a deep Sense of the divine Goodness, upon those memorable Periods of National Deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten by Christians or Men.

As the Religion of Nature and of Christ clearly condemn all Violence and Cruelty on Account of Men's Opinions tho' never so erroneous: And as Popery (which is a manifest Corruption both of Natural and Revealed Religion) would convert Protestants by such Arguments, as are indeed a strong Temptation to Men to dissemble their Faith, but surely the most unfit to enlighten or convince their Judgments, namely, the most cruel and inhuman Persecutions——We cannot but abhor and dread every Attempt to promote in this Kingdom the Interest of that Church, by putting the Scepter into Popish Hands.

The Mention of this must naturally carry back our Thoughts to that first Scene of most horrid Cruelty which opened in a Popish Reign soon after the Reformation: In which Persons eminent for Piety and Learning were sent to the Flames to expire in lingering Tortures, to make Way for Idolatry to become universal. As we must think on the Cruelties of that Time with the deepest Abhorrence and Concern, we shall of Course rejoyce and be thankful to Almighty God for so soon putting an End to that bloody Reign, and setting upon the Throne a Protestant Princess,

cess, in whose long and prosperous Reign the Reformed Religion took Root and flourished.

As a new Attempt was made in the following Reign to destroy our Religion with the Lives of its Professors, the whole Representative Body of the Kingdom, by a Gun-Powder Plot, our thankful Remembrance was again most justly due for the Providential Defeat of that most execrable Design. For which great Mercy our Church has very fitly appointed a perpetual Anniversary Thanksgiving.

The just Abhorrence and dread of Popery, which had already made such Havock in the Kingdom, and appeared to stick at no Methods how black soever to establish its Interest, had created (as very naturally it might) such Suspicions of new Attempts, to exterminate the Protestant Religion, that even the decent Ceremonies of our Church, together with the Episcopal Order were warmly opposed; the former having to some the Appearance of bordering upon Popish Superstition; and great Prejudices lying against the latter,

latter, occasioned chiefly by One of that Order, whose furious Bigottry, and cruel Persecutions of Men who had the Courage to stand up in Vindication of the Law of God and the Land against the Decrees of the Court, contributed in great Measure to all the Troubles that ensued; for by these Means Jealousies were inflamed, that produced a Civil War, which ended at length in the Murder of a Religious Prince, and the Subversion of the Established Government in Church and State. This was followed by Anarchy and Confusion, Enthusiasm and Hypocrisy, and, in many Instances, very grievous Oppressions.

A Deliverance out of this State, and a Recovery of our Legal Constitution by the Restoration of King *Charles* the Second to the Throne of his Ancestors, was without doubt a real Blessing to the Nation, and they appeared sufficiently sensible of it.

But how was this Blessing used or improved? Was it not in great Measure soon defeated by a general Corruption of Manners among all Ranks of Men? Even the Joy of
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the People (as it too commonly happens) grew into Sensuality and Profaneness. Never was a Court more vicious or debauched where pure Religion was professed. Even a Contempt of every thing serious appeared in the Majority ; nay pains were taken by some who had thrown off all Religion, to root out Religion from the Minds of others and to corrupt every moral Principle. If the King, who had experienced so kind a Providence in many wonderful Escapes from the Hands of his Enemies, had retained a just Sense of the Mercies he had received, by giving Countenance to Religion and Virtue in his own Example ; this Kingdom had probably in his Reign (as it had once before) been the Glory and Envy of all the Kingdoms upon Earth.

But it is easy to imagine that the Consequence of so corrupt a State of Things from the Highest to the Lowest, could not be very prosperous: Accordingly Popery, which had been all along working its Designs, and daily getting Ground under the Mask of a Zeal to suppress it, came once more in Possession of the Throne ; and the Attempts to
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make it the National Established Religion, and to root out Protestants by Violence, notwithstanding solemn Oaths, and frequent publick Protestations to protect them, were not long concealed. This Attempt upon the whole Constitution, to subvert our Laws, Religion and Liberty, and the more dreadful Prospect of far worse Persecutions that were preparing, unavoidably opened the Eyes of the Nation, and alarmed their strongest Fears. One happy Effect it had, it awakened them to a serious Sense of Things; and their Religion, which they saw was now about to be sacrificed, with the Liberties and Lives of its Professors, began to have its proper Influence upon their Hearts.

It was not in vain that they became zealous for their Religion, and (which was obviously their Duty in this Case) had Recourse to the Legal and Necessary Means of Redress, by inviting to the Throne a Protestant Prince, who restored our Religion and Laws, devoted his Study to promote the Nation's Happiness, and hazarded his Life in the Cause of Liberty. Whose Memory will therefore be ever dear and sacred to all who have a just Abhorrence of Religious or Civil Tyranny,
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and are Protestants in Reality as well as in Profession.

One would have thought that after repeated Experience of the insupportable Yoak of arbitrary Government, and the unrelenting Cruelties of Popish Policy and Superstition ; and after a long and secure Enjoyment of all their Rights under a legal and free Government—there had been little Danger of any new Design among those who had enjoyed the Protection of the Laws—professed the Religion of their Country——had, some of them, received peculiar Marks of Favour from the Crown——had bound their Souls by most solemn Oaths to defend the Government——That Persons under such Circumstances and special Obligations, should form a Design of subverting the mildest Government, of dethroning a Prince remarkable for Justice and Clemency ; and setting on the Throne an abjured Pretender, of doubtful Extraction, and educated in all the Bigottry and slavish Principles of Popery, and supported in his Pretensions by our inveterate Enemies.——Scarce any Thing less than the *known* Certainty of the Fact could have made it credible that there

there had been such a Design deliberately carried on.

The two flagrant Attempts of this Kind (within many of our Memories) in the late and present Reign, have been happily defeated: For the Suppression of the last of which, and the compleat Victory obtained over cruel and blood-thirsty Men under the wise and valiant Conduct of an Heroic Prince, zealous for his Country, and indefatigable in his Labours for it, we are this Day assembled to return our most fervent Thanks to Almighty God.

It remains only that we endeavour to become worthy of this great Mercy by the Reformation of our Lives, by a Conversation becoming those who profess the Gospel of Purity and Peace; or, (in the Words of *Samuel*) *by fearing the Lord and serving him in Truth with all our Heart.* We may then with an humble Confidence expect the Continuance of the Mercy we now commemorate; and that God will give further Success to our Arms over our Foreign as well as Domestick Enemies.

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If we duly consider, agreeably to the Design of this Day's Solemnity, *how great Things God hath done for us*, it cannot but dispose our Hearts to the Fear and Love of him, which will have a suitable Influence upon all our Actions. For the only Evidence, either to ourselves or others, that we truly fear and love God, is the keeping his Commandments. Whoever pretends to Religion while he lives in the Practice of any known Sin, is an Hypocrite: And he that saith he loveth God, while he hateth his Brother, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him, (1 John iv. 20.)

So that if after all the Mercies of God; *after he hath given us such a Deliverance as this, we should still do wickedly*—Continue to set Heaven at Defiance by horrid Oaths and Blasphemies—By a Contempt of every Thing serious—by wilful and deliberate Perjury—dishonouring our Bodies by gross Sensualities—injuring our Neighbour by Fraud and Oppression—should we go on to provoke the Almighty by any of these Abominations,—we have the highest Reason to expect the Completion of the Prophet's Threat-

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ning—ye shall be consumed both ye and your King.

The Means of punishing a disobedient People by temporal Judgments, even without a Miracle, are always in the Hand of God, who can make natural Causes at any Time the Executioners of his Wrath. Nothing therefore can it avail us to have gained the Victory over our Enemies, if our Unthankfulness or heinous Impieties should blast our Triumphs, by bringing upon us another formidable Rebellion; or should provoke divine Justice to consume us by other Instruments of his Vengeance; by Pestilence or Earthquakes, Lightning or Storms, Famine or fundry Kinds of Diseases.

National Judgments or Calamities may indeed fall promiscuously upon the Righteous and the Wicked. But it is matter of great Comfort to all that fear and serve God amidst a general Corruption of Manners, that they shall either be delivered from those Calamities by a peculiar Providence; or if they are permitted to befall them, their *temporal* Affliction will work for them an exceeding Weight

Weight of Glory and Happiness for an endless Duration.

God grant that all others, as they partake of the common Blessing of a National Deliverance, may so lay to Heart the great Things which he hath wrought for them, as to give Glory to his Name, not only with their *Lips*, but in their *Lives*; by adorning the Religion they profess by a suitable Behaviour: hereby manifesting to the World that they have indeed a Zeal for their Religion. By this they will lay the surest Foundation for the Blessings of this Life, and infallibly attain to everlasting Happiness in the Life which is to come.

To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us, thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise now and for ever.

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Wishes of Glory and Happiness for an end-
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